

William & Mary University Agrees to Reinstate Women's Gymnastics, Swimming and Volleyball; Comply Fully with Title IX in Two Years to Avoid Suit

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The legal team representing women student-athletes at William & Mary University announced today that the school had agreed to reinstate its women's gymnastics, swimming, and volleyball teams, develop a Gender Equity Plan, and come into full compliance with Title IX by the 2022-23 academic year to avoid being sued. Title IX, a federal civil rights law passed as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, prohibits gender discrimination at any educational institution receiving federal funds.

On September 3, 2020, William & Mary announced that it was eliminating its women's varsity gymnastics, swimming, and volleyball teams—and its men's varsity gymnastics, swimming, and track and field teams—at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. On September 23, 2020, Arthur Bryant of Bailey & Glasser, LLP, lead counsel for the women student-athletes, wrote to William & Mary President Katherine Rowe, told her he represented women on the three teams, and informed her that the elimination of those teams violated Title IX. His letter said that, if the school did not reinstate and continue the teams, he and his legal team would file a class action lawsuit in federal court to prevent their elimination and to hold William & Mary accountable for violating Title IX by

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depriving women athletes and potential athletes of equal opportunities, athletic financial aid, and treatment. The school's decision to reinstate the teams and comply with Title IX makes the lawsuit unnecessary.

"This is a major victory for gender equity, everyone at William & Mary, and all who care about fairness and the law," said Bryant of Bailey & Glasser's Oakland, CA office. "The school has decided to do the right thing: reinstate the women's gymnastics, swimming, and volleyball teams; create a detailed plan to ensure gender equity; and commit to get into compliance with all aspects of Title IX in two years. The women student-athletes at William & Mary are finally going to get the equal treatment they deserve—and the law requires."

Bryant had previously threatened to sue William & Mary for violating Title IX in 1991, when it decided to eliminate its women's basketball and swimming teams, along with its men's swimming and wrestling teams. The school quickly reinstated all four teams.

"We are extremely proud to represent the women athletes at William & Mary and extremely pleased to have achieved this great result," said Lori Bullock of Newkirk Zwagerman in Des Moines, Iowa, co-counsel with Bryant. "These are extraordinary young women. We are glad William & Mary saw the light and is going to ensure gender equity going forward. We hope everyone in the William & Mary community participates in the process to develop its Gender Equity Plan."

In addition to Bryant and Bullock, the legal team for the women student-athletes at William & Mary includes Cary Joshi and Sharon Iskra of Bailey & Glasser in Washington, DC, and Charleston, WV, respectively; Tillman Breckenridge of Breckenridge PLLC in Washington, DC; and Mark Dix and Connor Bleakley of Commonwealth Law Group in Richmond, VA.

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Practice Areas

Name, Image, & Likeness (NIL)

Title IX